# Education in Britain and in Russia:

# advantages and disadvantages



There are many different systems of education in the world nowadays. I'd like to tell about the British and Russian ones. These two systems of education differ from each other having certain peculiarities of their own which are closely connected with the specific conditions of life in Britain and in Russia.

Comparing these two systems we can undoubtedly find their own advantages and disadvantages.

# The System of Education in Britain

The educational system of Britain has developed for over a hundred years. It is a complicated system with wide variations between one part of the country and another. Three partners are responsible for the education service: central government – the Department of Education and Science (DES), local education authorities (LEAs), and schools themselves.

All these three partners are assisted by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate. The primary functions of the Inspectors are to give professional advice to the Department, local education authorities, schools and colleges, and discuss day-to-day problems with them.

 Nursery education. Education for children from 3 to 5 is not compulsory and can be provided in nursery schools and nursery classes attached to primary schools. The children spend most of their time in some sort of play activity, as far as possible of an educational kind. In any case, there are not enough of schools to take all children of that age group. A large proportion of children at this beginning stage are in the private sector where fees are charged. Many children attend pre-school playgroups, mostly organized by parents, where children can go in the morning or afternoon for a couple of times a week.

 Primary (preparatory) education. The primary school usually takes children from 5 to 11. Over half of the primary schools take the complete age group from 5 to 11. The remaining schools take the pupils aged 5 to 7 – infant schools, and 8 to 11 – junior schools. However, some LEAs have introduced first school, taking children aged 5 to 8, 9 to 10. The first school is followed by the middle school which takes children from 8 to 14. It follows by the upper school (the third level) which takes middle school-leavers until the age of 18. This three-stage system (first, middle and upper) is becoming more and more popular in a growing number of areas. The usual age for transfer from primary to secondary school is 11.

Secondary education. Secondary education is compulsory up to the age of 16, and pupils may stay on at school voluntarily until they are 18.

General education continues across a range of subjects until pupils are aged 14. At this point, they continue with such subjects as English, Mathematics and Science, and choose four or five additional subjects to study for getting their General Certificate of Education (GCE). These courses usually take two years and finish with «0» Level (Ordinary Level) examinations at the age of 15 or 16. At the end of compulsory education pupils have the choice of either leaving education to begin work or moving on to post-16 education.

 **Post-16 education.** Pupils who want to proceed studies generally remain in secondary education until the age of 18. They usually complete «A» Level (Advanced Level) examinations in three or more subjects. These «A» Levels exams, which they pass, are enough to get in to most universities and institutes of higher education.

# British state schools are divided into the following types:

**Grammar schools.** Children who go to grammar schools are usually those who show a preference for academic subjects, although many grammar schools now also have some technical courses. Grammar schools provide a mainly academic education for the 11 to 18 age group.

**Modern schools**. Secondary modern schools offer a more general education with a practical bias up to the minimum school-leaving age of 16.Boys and girls who are interested in working with their hands and learning in a practical way can go to a technical school and learn some trade.

**Technical schools.** Some children go to technical schools. Most courses there are either commercial or technical. Some local educational authorities run technical schools (11 – 18). They provide a general academic education, but place particular emphasis on technical subjects.

**Comprehensive schools.** These schools usually combine all types of secondary education. They have physics, chemistry, biology laboratories, machine workshops for metal and woodwork and also geography, history and art departments, commercial and domestic courses.

Most children (over 80 per cent) go to comprehensive schools.

**There are three categories of comprehensive schools:**

 schools which take pupils from 11 to 18,

schools which take middle school-leavers from 12, 13 or 14 to 18, and

schools which take the age group from 11 to 16.

The pupils in the latter group, wishing to continue their education beyond the age of 16 (to be able to enter university) may transfer to the sixth form of an 11-18 school, to a sixth-form college or to a tertiary college which provide complete courses of secondary education. The tertiary college offers also part-time vocational courses.

There are **special schools** adapted for the physically and mentally handicapped children. The compulsory period of schooling here is from 5 to 16. Special schools and their classes are more generally staffed than ordinary schools and provide, where possible physiotherapy, speech therapy and other forms of treatment. Special schools are normally maintained by state, but a large proportion of special boarding schools are private and fee-charging.

 **Private schools**. There are also many schools which the State does not control. They are private schools. They charge fees for educating children, and many of them are boarding schools, at which pupils live during the term. Some private schools are famous, such as Eton, Harrow, Rugby and Winchester. Harrow school is famous as place where Winston Churchill was educated, as well as six other Ministers of Great Britain, the poet Lord Byron and many other prominent people.

# Higher Education in Britain

**Post-18 education**. Those who coped with «A» Level examinations may enter any professional college or university to get higher education.

Good «A» Level results in at least two subjects are necessary to get a place at one. However, good results at exams are not enough to enter a university. Universities choose their students after interviews, and competition for places at universities is hard. For all British citizens a place at the university brings with it a grant from their Local Education Authorities. After three years of study at a university a graduate leaves it with a Degree of Bachelor of Science, Engineering, Medicine, Arts, etc. Most degree courses at universities last 3 years, language courses 4 years (including a year spent abroad). Medicine and dentistry courses are longer (5-7 years). Post-graduate study leads to postgraduate certificates and diplomas.

Students who obtain their Bachelor degree can apply to take a further degree course, usually involving a mixture of exam courses and research. There are two different types of post-graduate courses - the Master’s degree (MA), which takes one or two years, and the higher degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), which takes two or three years.

Students don't usually have a job during the term because the lessons, called lectures, seminars, classes or tutorials (small groups) are full time. However, many students now have to work in the evenings.

There are about 90 universities in Britain. They are divided into three types: the old universities (Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh Universities), the 19th century universities such as London and Manchester universities, and the new universities.

In addition to universities, there are also polytechnics and a series of different types of assisted colleges, such as colleges of technology, art, etc, which tend to provide more work-orientated courses than universities. Some of these courses are part-time and students can work for one day a week or longer periods.

# The School Year in Britain

The academic year in Great Britain lasts from September till July. And it is divided into three trimesters: **Autumn trimester.** It is from the beginning of September till the middle of December. **Spring trimester**. It is from the beginning of January till the middle or the end of March. (It depends on Easter Holiday.) **Summer trimester**. It lasts from the beginning or the middle of April till the middle of July.

   Moreover, in the middle of each trimester a short break, called “half term”, is usually planned. It starts consequently at the end of October, in the middle of February and at the end of May.

# Examinations in Britain

At the age of 14 or 15 in the third or fourth form of secondary school, pupils begin to choose their exam subjects and prepare for their exams. Those who stay on into the sixth form prepare for "A" Level exams (Advanced). Good results in two-five subjects are necessary to get a place at one of the British universities.

At the end of the sixth form they take the first public exam for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Some pupils leave school at the age of 16 and go to a Further

Education College where they choose more practical courses (engineering, typing, and hairdressing).

# Educational System in Russia

 Russians have always shown a great concern for education. The right to education is stated in the constitution of the Russia Federation. It’s ensured by compulsory secondary schools, colleges and higher education establishments. It is also ensured by the development of evening courses and the system of state scholarship and grants.

 The education in Russia begins at the age of 3-4, at this age children can go to a kindergarten. In the kindergarten the child deals with music and drawing, starts to count and read, it is also develops physically. The kindergartens are mostly supported by the state, however, the parents also pay for the attending of the kindergarten, and the price is not very high. A kindergarten is not compulsory. Many parents prefer to educate their child up to school at home.

 The school begins at the age of 6-7. There are usual state schools in Russia, in addition, state and private lyceums and gymnasiums. It is a serious problem for the parents to decide, which school their child should attend. The quality of the education in state schools is not always so good, as in gymnasiums. But gymnasiums are much more expensive. Different additional subjects are also taught in gymnasiums.

Every school has a «core curriculum» of academic subjects, such as Russian, Mathematics, Literature, Biology, Chemistry, Geography ,Physics, Foreign Languages and Physical Training.

Education in Russia is compulsory up to the 9th form including.

**The stages of compulsory schooling in Russia are:**

- primary education for ages 6-7 to 9-10 including;

- secondary school for ages 10 -11 to 14-15 including.

The primary school and the secondary school together comprise 11 years of education, but after 9 years of studying children can go to a college which offers programs of academic subjects and a program of training in a technical field or a profession.

If a pupil wants to go to the university, he must study at school for two years more.

After leaving the secondary school, the lyceum, the gymnasium, or the college one can get the higher education. All applicants must pass entrance examinations. Today these entrance examinations are often connected with final examinations. That is if one has passed the final examinations well, the entrance examinations won't be necessary.

 Students study at the university for four years and then they get the Bachelor degree. Then one can study for two years more to get the Master's degree. The Master's degree is considered to be an advantage for potential employers.

The system of higher and secondary education in Russia is going through a transitional period. The main objectives of the reforms are: to decentralize the higher education system, to develop a new financial mechanism, to give more academic freedom to faculties and students. All secondary schools, institutes and universities until recently have been funded by the state. Now there is quite a number of private fee-paying primary and secondary schools, some universities have fee-paying departments.

# The School Year in Russia

  The academic year in Russia lasts from the beginning of September till the end of May. It is divided into four terms. At the end of each term the schoolchildren have their holidays.

The first term. It begins on the 1st of September and lasts till the end of October. The second term. It usually starts at the beginning of November and lasts till the end of December. The third term. It is the longest term in a school year. It begins in the middle of January and lasts till the end of March. For the first-year pupils there are some additional holidays in the middle of February. The forth term. It begins on the beginning of April and lasts till the end of a school year, till the end of May.

# Examinations in Russia

The procedure of passing the examinations by the nine-year pupils and the school-leavers has recently been changed.

The nine-year pupils have to take two compulsory exams and two exams according to their choice. The choice of the exams depends on the profile they would like to follow in the 10th and 11th forms: Mathematics, Humanitarian, Social Science, etc.

The school-leavers have to pass Unified State Examinations. USEs are held on the following subjects: Russian, Literature, Mathematics, Foreign Languages, Chemistry, Biology, Social Science, Geography, History and so on. Russian and Mathematics are compulsory. Each school-leaver can choose from one to nine more examinations to take. It depends on his or her choice of higher educational institution. If a school-leaver wants to try his or her fortune at a few higher educational establishments he or she will choose more exams to take.

The system of USE is the system of joining the final examinations at school and the entrance examinations at higher educational establishment. The results of the USE are taken at all higher educational establishment of the country.

# The Similarities of Two Systems of Education

After studying the systems of education in Britain and Russia we have come to the conclusion that there are some common features:

- both systems have the same stages of education: primary, secondary and higher,

- there is a wide choice of the establishments,

- at the age of 16 the pupils can choose to continue studying at school or to enter a college of secondary education,

- to transfer from the secondary stage to the higher stage one must pass the state examination.

# Differences of Two Systems of Education:

- children in Britain start learning at the age of about 5 years old, while in Russia – at the age of about 6-7,

- the number of private schools in Russia is not so large as in Britain,

- the school year in Britain and in Russia is organized in different way. The academic year in Britain lasts from September till July and  the academic year in Russia - from the beginning of September till the end of May.

Thus I can made a conclusion of the differences. They are: the grades of education; the duration of the year; the types of schools; the specification of studying programs; the age of students; types of passing exams.

# Advantages of the British Educational System :

- there is a wide variety of schools and higher establishments, introduced in the system of education in Britain. This variety gives the children of all abilities an opportunity to get secondary and higher education;

- in spite of the fact that the school day lasts longer than in Russia, children in Britain practically don’t have home task, that’s why it is easier and less tiresome to study;

- a diploma, received in Britain gives a person an opportunity to find the job in any country of the world easier than the Russian diploma.

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# Advantages of the Russian Educational System :

- the standard of education in Russia is very high and gives deep knowledge of all subjects;

- the Russian educational system is founded upon a solid theoretical base;

- the higher education in Russia is much cheaper than in other countries;

- the school year in Russia is better organized than in Britain. It is more convenient to have 4 holidays a year and longer summer holidays.

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# Disadvantages of Two Educational Systems :

- the main disadvantage of education in Britain is the fact that little children are deprived of the childhood. Too much time is devoted to primary education. Children must have childhood.

- one of the disadvantages of the British system of education is a wide variety of subjects that a child should learn but some of them won't be helpful ;

- the Russian school curriculum is aimed at children with ordinary abilities though there exist many pupils whose abilities are above or below ordinary skills and so some children receive the knowledge that for the most of them will be useless in their future lives .

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# Conclusion

To sum up, I can say that the Russian and British systems of education are not ideal but very similar. So the fundamental task of the both systems of education today is the same - the modernization of the entire educational system. It is not only to provide more and better schools and universities, but also to re-examine the contents of the education and to bring it into line with modern requirements.